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ABSTRACT

The relationship between social and economic classification, mobility, and continuance in school was examined in the municipalities of San Andres Cholula, San Gregorio Atzompa, and San Felipe Teotlalcingo (Mexico). The premise was that the school was not a mobilizing agent within the community, but rather served to stabilize existing social and economic relationships as youth were integrated into the national culture. Early adolescents' aspirations toward mobility and career choice, continuance in school past basic education, and enrollment in basic studies were correlated to socioeconomic classifications. Two rural families with children, adolescents, and adult members were interviewed regarding the school's role in their lives. Questionnaires were distributed to pupils from 14 "primarias" (grades 1-6) and 4 "secundarias" (grades 7-9); follow-up interviews were conducted in 2 of the 4 "secundarias". Teachers were interviewed concurrent with the distribution of the questionnaires. Interview and questionnaire data analysis identified clustering, trends, and response patterns. The school's role as set forth in the premise was sustained throughout the study. Within the three municipalities the school did not serve the school-age youth indiscriminate of social or economic categories; rather, it consistently provided more years of schooling to the youth of the already socially and economically advantaged groups. (NQ)

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FORMAL SCHOOLING AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF STRATIFIED RURAL YOUTH

by

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FORMAL SCHOOLING AND THE ASPIRATIONS

OF STRATIFIED RURAL YOUTH

Elemental education is now available to Mexican children. With more than seventy per cent of all children within the 7-14 age range in school, and the remainder exposed to a limited amount of primaria instruction, it is now accepted that this generation of youth will be literate, and will have mastered the basic communication skills of reading, writing and number computation. As more and more of "incomplete" primaria in the Republic of Mexico extend their grade levels to include the six required, it is expected then that there will be a corresponding gradual rise in the average number of years of schooling youngsters take. Indeed, Mexico has reached the point in its educational history when basic schooling is becoming a universal reality. Generally, there is no question as to the value of this type of schooling for Mexico's future citizens. What seems to be in question, however, is the implied value of continuance in school until completion of primaria as well as secundaria. This implication being that the acquisition of further knowledge and skills will somehow afford greater opportunity for a social or economic mobility.

Numerous educators and social scientists have sought to ascribe to the schools the role of community social and economic development agency.

George Counts in Dare We Build A New Society and George Sanchez in A Mexican Revolution By Education both suggested that by educating the people a dynamic social and economic change would take place. Another example of this "faith" in education can be found in the Ashby Report (Ashby Commission on Post Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria) which suggested that Nigerian national economic development would be dependent upon a major prior educational investment in the people. Historically, the same faith in the value of schooling has at least two examples in the Mexican educational experience: Vasconcellos in the 1920's and Torres Bodet in the 1940's and 1950's, both marshalled Mexican teachers as maestros misioneros and as members of misiones culturales in order to introduce fundamental change in Mexican community life. Secretary of State Rusk at the Policy Conference of Economic Growth and Investment in Education, sponsored by the U.N. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development stated:

> .ducation makes possible the economic democracy that raises a social mobility. For it is education that insures that classes are not frozen and that an elite of whatever kind does not perpetuate itself.
>
> (Education and the Development of Nations.)

The implication being that education provided for a social mobility which would ultimately be accounted for in economic terms. And more recently, F. F. Hill, Vice President of the Ford Foundation, offered as his first hypothesis for development, the following:

> In modern societies, formal education provides the most important single means of developing people.

On the other hand, Margarita Campos de Garcia's recent longitudinal study (1973) Estudio Socio Economico de Tepetlaoxto on the impact of the school on the community of Tepetlaoxtoc, in the Estado de México, indicated that there was no direct immedidiate benefit to either the sixth grade graduating pupils, or to the community at large, in their having completed primaria education when compared to their peers who did not receive their Certificate. This same lack of usefulness was cited in a major Peruvian study (1966) sponsored by UNESCO and carried out by Jesus Veliz Lizarraga titled: Los Determinantes Sociales del Desarrollo Comunal. Also, Eric Wolfe in Some of the Shaking Earth and Diego Rosado in Historia Económica de México: both make general reference to the same phenomenon that there is no apparent directly visible change in the economic or social life in the lives of people resulting from the introduction of schooling. Thus, on the one hand, school is purported to serve as a mobilizing agency within the dynamics of social and economic development; and, on the other hand, it is charged with failure when no visible change takes place. This empirical study, then, sought to clarify the relationship among three factors: social and economic classification, mobility and continuance in school.

OPERATIONAL TERMINOLOGY

Before developing the premise of the study and proceeding to its description, it is appropriate to define certain of the descriptive terms used repeatedly. Although they are not unusual terms, and are readily found in the literature, they are listed below for the sake of greater clarity: primaria and secundaria are levels of schooling in the

Mexican educational system. Primaria includes the first six grades of school, while secundaria is the subsequent three. The former is a general educational program ostensibly guaranteed to all children in Article III of the Constitución de 1917. While the latter is a program of study considered an intermediate step either towards industrial commerical employment or towards further schooling. Other terms used correspond to the economic divisions made by the IX Censos Generales de Población. The two employment categories used in this study are farmer, those people actively employed in agriculture and/or animal husbandry; and commercial-industrial, those being the remaining categories of transportation, industry, commerce, services, and professions. Since the study was conducted in a rural area of Puebla (State), it was appropriate to unify the various categories. The second set of correlated categories which helped establish social economic status were: self-employed and other-employed. These categories were converted into a classification hierarchy of social economic status, as follows:

Other-employed farmer

Other-employed commerical-industrial

Self-employed farmer

Self-employed commercial-industrial (artisan & service incl.)

Other categories were not included because of their absence from the local schools. The hierarchy was divided with the first two considered one category, and the subsequent two a second category; more precise placement was made, when uncertainty arose, by adding the family income factor of those earning less than 500 pesos monthly, those earning between 500-1,000 pesos, and those earning more than 1,000 monthly.

PREMISE

The premise developed for this study was that the school is not a mobilizing agent within the community, rather serving to stabilize existing social and economic relationships as youth is integrated into the national culture.

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

In order to verify the premise, a research design was developed which explored empirically early adolescents aspirations toward mobility and career choice, correlating them to social and economic classifications. Similarly, continuance in school past basic education was correlated to the same classifications, as was enrollment of pupils in basic studies.

The methodology included several investigative procedures. Two rural families with children, adolescents and adult members were carefully interviewed as regards to the role of the school in their lives. Pupils from four secundarias were questioned, with follow-up interviews conducted in two of the four schools. Questionnaires were also distributed in fourteen primarias. And finally, teachers in the schools were interviewed concurrent with the distribution of the questionnaires.

Since the time between the beginning and the end of the study exceeded two years, it was necessary to continually check back with the early informants to ascertain continued validity. The longitudinal data verified stability in the information being collected over time. The questionnaire and interview data were analyzed to identify clustering, trends, and patterns of responses. Such an approach was deemed more adequate than the traditional statistically significant methodology, given the variety of data collection devices used and the obvious inability to control the multiplicity of variables existant in the field.

THREE MUNICIPALITIES

The three municipalities in the study were San Andrés Cholula, San Gregorio Atzompa, and San Felipe Teotlalcingo. There were 28,000 people in the region of which 11,000 were of school age. Of the latter number, 3,000 had no instruction in a formal school setting and 200 were participating in post-primary instruction. Twenty per cent of adult men were illiterate while 35 per cent of the adult women are unable to read and write. Within the 3 municipalities there were 4 secundarias and 14 primarias schools in 11 villages with a total of 8,000 participating children. The primarias school population followed the characteristic pyramid found throughout Mexican schools:

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)1	(8)2	(9)3
Pupils	3000	2000	1200	700	600	500	100	75	25

The municipalities economic base consisted of 7000 active adults with more than 5000 engaged in farming, 400 in transformation industry, 200 in artisan trades and 350 in commerce. The distribution of self-employed and other-employed was 4500 in the former category and 2500 in the latter. Of the economically active, 4000 adults earn 500 pesos or less monthly for their labor, 1000 adults earn between 500 and 1,000 pesos montly, and 500 adults earn more than 1,000 pesos monthly. Additionally, 1,500 economically active adults declared no income whatsoever. Caution is urged in interpreting this data, since the 1970 census figures have been somewhat dated by the inflationary spiral of the last 4 years, and economic data collection is notoriously weak.

INVESTIGATIONS

1. Two extended families: The family of Don Juan lived in the village of Tonanzintla, municipality of San Andrés Cholula.

In addition to his wife, the family included five sons and two daughters. The oldest son was 34 and the youngest son was ten. The family properties included a rather large farm house, with three-unit living quarters, six cows, a dairy stable, a storage granary, and garden in the same locale; as well as three other plots of land, two ejido properties and one privately owned, totalling ten hectares. The ejido land was primarily utilized for cattle feed and corn, while the private land was for commerical flower production. Larspur, angel wisp, dalias and shasta daisies were cultivated for sale in the Mexican metropolitan market, 120 kilometers away. The milk was sold for processing as cheese.

The second oldest son and the second daughter were married. The son integrated his wife into his parents' home, while the daughter lives with her husband in a nuclear home at a distance from the rest. The other daughter lived at home, although she occasionally worked in the city of Puebla as a servant. She was unmarried, the mother of two children. The married son and his wife also had a child. Although the one daughter lived separately from the rest of the family, her husband integrated his land and labor with the others in flower production. Two sons were still of school age.

Don Juan, as a young man, contracted himself as a bracero each season over a ten-year period; and during the last three seasons his oldest son accompanied him. He was very familiar with the agricultural communities of Southwestern United States and California. Not only did this experience teach him floriculture technology, but it helped him create the capital necessary to transform his production from maize to flowers, as well as purchase a truck to transport his produce to market.

Don Juan's schooling was through the fourth grade, and he was literate while his wife was illiterate. He was proud of having insisted that all his sons study at the primaria level, and that one was studying in the secundaria. All the sons had received their Certificates for officially passing the sixth grade. "With culture (schooling)" he stated "my sons can defend themselves in the markets of the city (Mexico)."

The oldest son, put it another way "schooling has been important to me because it has helped me communicate (tratar) better with the agricultural engineers from Chapingo (The National School of Agriculture), and the bank economists of the Banco Ejidal."

His brother said further "today's agriculture requires careful reading of all the informational booklets: there is so much to know to keep up to date (quedar al tanto)."

Both the girls learned the basic communication skills and then dropped out of school. "My daughter will need more schooling than I," the married daughter stated "so that she can become independent (para que pueda independizarse)." "I had enough schooling for my life here, but times are changing, she (my daughter) won't be lucky enough to remain in the campo." "With schooling life will not be so hard in the city."

Don Filemon and his family lived in San Felipe Teotlalcingo, the village and municipality of the same name. His wife and two of his four sons lived under the same roof. The oldest son was a machine operator in a textile mill, married with a life of his own in the city of Puebla. He and his family visited San Felipe about once a month. The second son drove his father's bus in the cooperative bus line between San Felipe and San Martin Texmelucan, and adjacent agricultural towns. The third son was still dependent

upon his father, although he lived in Puebla and was studying in the preparatoria. He planned to study medicine in the future. The youngest son had just entered secundaria.

The father owned, in addition to his home and the bus: a plot of three hectares which he rented out, and a small street store which his wife ran. "When I was very young" Don Filemon related "my father died and left me a small fracción (parcel)." "I went to Georgia (U.S.A.) as a bracero -- when my mother married -- to harvest fruit." "The missionaries taught me English, so I became the boss although I was not even twenty." "I didn't finish school (primaria) but I did good: for almost twenty years I kept taking braceros back to Georgia." "The owner of the orchard wanted me to stay, but it was time to get married and establish my own family."

The textile worker, the eldest son, said "I am thirty now and the factory manager wants to send me to textile school in North Carolina." "I never cared for school (nunca me parecio escuela), but thanks to the effort (esfuerzo) of my parents I completed secundaria. "Now I go to North Carolina: I will come back ayudante to the manager."

And the bus driver, the second son, added "The bus is good work, I learned mechanics in secundaria. That has helped me keep the bus going." "Before I get married I will need to buy my own bus, so that I can support my own family. They will all need more schooling and culture than I have. It will cost lots of money."

The preparatoria pupil, the third son, related "The school in San Felipe was very limited (fue muy limitada). I am having a hard time in preparatoria because of my deficient early schooling. Of course, I will go on to medical school because I am catching up." "I have promised to take

care of my mother when she is old in return for university studies. I would do it anyway, but my father wanted a formal commitment. They work so hard, are so poor, I must not fail them."

The secundaria pupil, the fourth son, stated "I am the youngest -- my parents and my brothers tell me I must continue in school although I don't want to."

Both Don Juan and D. Filemon looked upon the school as the instrument whereby their families would continue to prosper. Their children ascribed to the school the elements which contributed to the protection of their social economic well be.ng.

2. Four secundarias: The data collected from pupils in the four secundarias provided a descriptive typology of rural adolescents who continued in school.

The secundaria male pupil in these communities was one year behind the usual national age range for his grade. He lived in close proximity to the school. He was one of six children, in third or fourth position, and the first of his brothers/sisters to go beyond primaria. His family owned its home, an 8-10 hectare farm, with livestock. There was a small store in the front room of their home, or some other capitalized enterprise on their property. The pupil considered his family to be well off within the community. His home and life was without privation. Continuing in school was very important to his family, particularly to his mother who always asked about grades. He helped with the family work, but neither expected nor seemed to desire a share of the family property when his parents died. He was getting an education and if he wanted to later on he would buy property. He did not think much about going on to

secundaria while in *primaria*, but in sixth grade his parents and teacher informed him that he would continued.

However, after entering *secundaria* he immediately recognized it as preparation for technical-industrial employment in the city of Puebla. He considered himself fortunate that his parents encouraged him to continue in school and he was anxious to succeed. A professional career was a possibility, but he was not sure about continuing university studies. As a technically trained person he thought he would be as well off as his parents and better off than his older brothers. His younger brothers would probably go to school as well. He expected to continue living at home after he graduated from *secundaria*, and he planned to commute to work. Of course, this would all change if he had the opportunity to go to the university. His friends were mostly boys and girls in school like himself. He had no friends of his own age outside of his school. All his friends' homes and life styles were similar to his own. He considered his success or failure in *secundaria* the result of his own effort and ability and he expected to succeed. Mathematics was his most important subject as it would prepare him for a career: it was also his most difficult. World history was his least interesting subject and he saw very little relevance in learning it. His *primaria* studies did not prepare him for mathematics and he felt he had spent too much time on history and civics. If he did not complete *secundaria* it would be because of mathematics. Although he had no choice about whether or not he went to school, he saw the educative process as being of importance to him since it would help him get a good job. He knew of adolescents without their *primaria* certificates who went to the city (Puebla or Mexico, D. F.) and were not able to find work.

By finishing secundaria he assumed he would be employable. His career choices were technical-industrial; and he considered that his knowledge and skill would insure his relatively high placement in the industrial market place.

The female pupil in these same secundarias was generally one year younger than her male counterpart and on a par with national data. Although fewer in numbers she represented a different typology. Seldom was she the first daughter in the family: she was in second or third position and had one or two sisters younger than she who planned to follow her in school. She came from the same social economic family setting as her boy classmates, however, her decision to continue in school was more her own than was the case with adolescent boys. She saw her educational goals to be fulfilled various ways; such as becoming prepared to work in clerical or administrative postions until she married, or becoming a professional nurse or teacher with marriage a more distant aspiration. The young adolescent female saw herself marrying within the community after marrying within the community after she had accumulated a small capital (patrimonio) to help her and her husband get a good start in life. By that she meant to have a furnished home, a foundation herd of cows, some agricultural equipment and land of their own. She considered herself luckier than her male counterparts because schooling was making her more independent than them; even after they finished their schooling, she reasoned, they will have a life time of responsibilities towards their parents while she would be only concerned with the man she chose and her own children.

Mathematics and science were her most important subjects, and although they took a lot of study time they were not particularly difficult.

She enjoyed the technological part of the curriculum -- cooking, garment making, and office skills -- because it was helping her prepare for adulthood.

The adolescents in this typology manifested a decision to enter the national commercial-industrial economy. In the boys' case, there was a commitment to a career outside the community; while on the other hand, the girls saw their envolvement in national life as transitory -- that is until they could establish their own home in the community.

3. Fourteen Primarias: The study carried out in the 14 primarias of the 3 municipalities was primarily to compare the distribution of social economic stratification in the community with that found at two school levels: basic schooling (1.2.3.) and upper elementary (4.5.6.). First, second and third grade pupils' social and economic stratification distribution and that of the general population of the educational communities under study were similar. However, there was a marked drop off beyond third grade of children from families that were un-landed or not industrially-commercially employed. Also, among the pupils of these social economic categories who remained in school and passed third grade there was little or no aspiration to continue schooling beyond the sixth grade. The opposite was the case for children of families that were landed or were industrially economically employed. These all aspired to continue schooling after received their Certificado de Primaria.

4. Teacher Interviews: As the several investigations were proceeding, continuous cross-checking of data was made with the teachers of the different classes. Of importance in these interviews was the validation of social, economic and educational data being collected.

But of primary interest was the attitudinal disposition of these authorities to the pupils under their tutelage. Teachers interviewed repeatedly manifested a marked preference or predisposition towards certain pupils in their classes. Their oral evaluation of identified children suggested that certain types of pupils were "promising" and other types were "taking up space." Teachers in the first three grades of primaria found it relatively "easy to tell" which pupils had the capacity to complete primaria; generally, third grade was considered the point in time when continuance in school or lateral withdrawal from school by the pupil was definitely made.

After almost 100 interviews with teachers, correlating their responses with the pupil questionnaire date, it became readily apparent that the teachers positive attitude was towards pupils of self-employed farmer or commerical-industrial family types. Conversely, their attitude towards other sectors was negative. While the teachers interviewed were unaware of the particular information being sought from them related to social and economic mobility there was a particularly ironic twist which reoccured a number of times. After sorting the pupils in terms of their educational performance, and projecting their success or failure possibilities, the teacher would often point to the exceptionally successful pupil in the class as having done so well despite his humble origin and/or limited resources. Thus, on the one hand, children were sorted social economically albeit with educational criteria, while on the other hand the reoccuring "exceptional" child was one who did not belong to the favored group. This phenomenon suggests, perhaps, that the teacher in her "surprise" at the unexpected performance of the pupil was tacitly admitting the stratification rule by allowing for the exception.

SUMMATION AND UNSETTLING IMPLICATIONS

The role of the school as set forth in the premise was sustained throughout the investigation. Within the context of the municipalities studied, the school did not serve the school-age youth indiscriminate of social or economic categories. Rather, the school consistently provided more years of schooling to the youth of the already socially and economically advantaged groups in the community. The unsettling implication in this study is the apparent accentuation of inequity of opportunity brought about by the very institution that might be expected to provide a mechanism for dynamic economic and social mobility.